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Message Text

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20
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W
---------- 112448
P 190255Z MAR 75
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
INFO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3807
USDEL JEC PARIS PRIORITY
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 3088

EXDIS

NOFORN

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM DANANG 0257 SENT ACTION AMEMBASSY SAIGON MARCH 18 BEING REPEATED TO YOU, QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L DANANG 0257

EXDIS

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, VS
SUBJ: MOOD IN HUE - MARCH 18

1. MOST PEOPLE IN HUE HAVE BECOME GRAVELY WORRIED SINCE MORNING OF MARCH 17. AT THAT TIME NEW INFLUX OF QUANG TRI REFUGEES BEGAN TO ARRIVE BEARING NEWS THAT QUANG TRI PROVINCE CHIEF HAD ADVISED CIVIL SERVANTS TO MOVE FAMILIES OUT OF PROVINCE, AND AT SAME TIME NEWS SPREAD THAT MANY OF THE MARINES ON WHOSE DEFENSE THE PEOPLE HAD PARTICULARLY DEPENDED HAD BEEN WITHDRAWN TO DANANG.

2. UNTIL MORNING OF MARCH 17, FEW FAMILIES HAD MOVED SOUTH TO DANANG. BEGINNING EVENING OF MARCH 17 AND INCREASING ON MARCH 18, GREAT NUMBERS OF HUE CITIZENS AND REFUGEES FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE BEGAN TO MAKE THEIR WAY SOUTHWARD. MOST OF THE TRANSPORTATION IN
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CITY HAS BEEN PRESSED INTO SERVICE. ACCORDING TO A RUMOR ON

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MORNING OF MARCH 18, QL-1 NEAR HAI VAN PASS HAD BEEN SHELLED AND THE TRAFFIC TURNED BACK. PROVINCE OFFICE HUE HAS CONFIRMED THAT SOME BUSES WERE INDEED TURNED BACK, BUT MILITARY AUTHORITIES DENY THAT SHELLING OCCURRED, SO CAUSE FOR RETURN OF SOME BUSES IS UNKNOWN.

3. GOVERNMENT OFFICE IN CITY ARE STILL MANNED, BUT ONLY WITH SKELETON STAFFS AS MOST CIVIL SERVANTS TRY TO ARRANGE TRANSPORTATION FOR THEIR FAMILIES. SCHOOLS HAVE SENT THEIR BOARDING STUDENTS HOME ON THE ADVICE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES. HUE UNIVERSITY CLASSES ARE NO LONGER BEING HELD. IT IS RELIABLY REPORTED THAT THE PROVINCE CHIEF, COL. NGUYEN HUU DUE, UNOFFICIALLY ADVISED THE POLICE TO MOVE THEIR FAMILIES OUT AND HE MAY HAVE DONE SO WITH OTHER BRANCHES AS WELL. IN ANY CASE, THE REPORT HAS CIRCULATED WIDELY.

4. THE PROVINCE CHIEF HAS MADE NO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT SINCE BEFORE MARCH 17, BUT HE HAS CALLED A MEETING OF RELIGIOUS, EDUCATIONAL, POLITICAL AND CIVIC LEADERS FOR 1630 MARCH 18 AND PEOPLE EXPECT AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO FOLLOW THAT. MEANWHILE, NO PREPARATIONS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN MADE FOR CIVIL DEFENSE AND THERE IS LITTLE YET VISIBLE WHICH WOULD REASSURE THE AVERAGE CITIZEN THAT THE AUTHORITIES MEAN TO DEFEND THE CITY. DESPITE THIS, THERE IS NO PANIC. THERE IS INSTEAD AN ALMOST FRENETIC PACE TO THE CITY AS NEIGHBORS PACK, OR CONSULT TO TRADE THE LATEST RUMORS, ONE OF WHICH IS THAT ALL OFFICIAL AMERICANS BUT ONE HAVE LEFT THE CITY, WHICH IS, OF COURSE, NOT THE CASE.

5. SINCE THE FOREGOING REPORT WAS RECEIVED APO HAS LEARNED FROM GENERAL TRUONG THAT HE SPENT THE AFTERNOON IN HUE AND MET WITH RELIGIOUS, EDUCATIONAL, POLITICAL AND CIVIC LEADERS, AND IT IS PROBABLY FOR TRUONG'S VISIT THAT THE PROVINCE CHIEF CONVENED THE MEETING REFERRED TO IN PARAGRAPH 4. TRUONG TOLD APO EVENING OF MARCH 18 THAT HE HAD EXPLAINED TO THE GROUP FRANKLY THE "CRITICAL" MILITARY SITUATION FACING THEM AND HAD APPEALED FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE IN HELPING THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES COPE WITH THE VAST NUMBER OF REFUGEES INTO HUE. TRUONG SAID THAT THE CIVIC LEADERS WITH WHOM HE SPOKE RESPONDED FAVORABLY TO HIS DISCUSSION. TRUONG PRAISED THE MANNER IN WHICH THE HUE MAYOR/THUA THIEN PROVINCE CHIEF, COL. DUE, IS DEALING WITH THE DIFFICULT SITUATION.
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